

Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
Water Resources Division
Water Rights Bureau

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
For Routine Actions with Limited Environmental Impact

Part I. Proposed Action Description

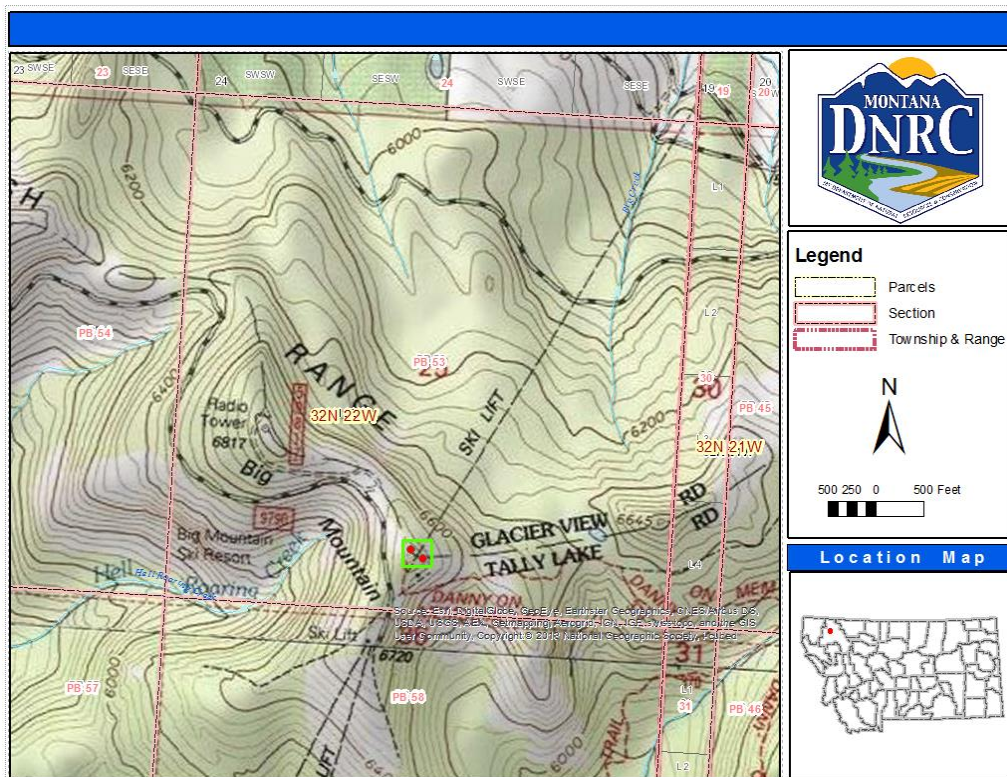
1. *Applicant/Contact name and address:*

Winter Sports, Inc.
PO Box 1400
Whitefish, MT 59937

2. *Type of action:* Application for Beneficial Water Use Permit 76LJ 30104499

3. *Water source name:* Groundwater

4. *Location affected by project:* The place of use is generally located at the Summit House Facility at Whitefish Mountain Resort, S2, Sec 25, T32N, R22W Flathead County, Montana



5. *Narrative summary of the proposed project, purpose, action to be taken, and benefits:*

The Applicant is requesting 20 GPM of additional flow from public water supply well (PWS) #1 (GWIC No. 88986), which will increase the rate from 50 GPM allowed under Certificate 76LJ 61969-00 to 70 GPM. The Applicant is proposing to add a second well to their water system; point of diversion (PWS #2, GWIC No. 284164). PWS well #2 will be pumped at a rate of 70 GPM; the two wells will not operate simultaneously. 70 GPM is the requested flow rate for both wells. No volume is requested because supplemental and associated Groundwater Certificate 76LJ 61969-00 provides 3.35 AF of water, which is adequate for the proposed commercial use. The DNRC shall issue a water use permit if an applicant proves the criteria in 85-2-311 MCA are met.

6. *Agencies consulted during preparation of the Environmental Assessment:*
(include agencies with overlapping jurisdiction)

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Montana Natural Heritage Program: Endangered, Threatened Species and Species of Special Concern, Wetland Mapper program
- Montana Department of Fish Wildlife & Parks (DFWP); Dewatered Stream Information
- Montana Department of Environmental Quality's (MDEQ) Clean Water Act Information and PWS Drinking Water Watch databases
- U.S. Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS); web soil survey
- Montana Historical Society

Part II. Environmental Review

1. Environmental Impact Checklist:

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

WATER QUANTITY, QUALITY AND DISTRIBUTION

Water quantity - Assess whether the source of supply is identified as a chronically or periodically dewatered stream by DFWP. Assess whether the proposed use will worsen the already dewatered condition.

The Application is for groundwater, this section is not applicable. The Applicant is increasing the rate at which water is diverted from groundwater, no additional volume was requested. Certificate 76LJ 61969-00 provides enough volume for the proposed use. No depletions to surface waters are anticipated.

Determination: No impact.

Water quality - Assess whether the stream is listed as water quality impaired or threatened by DEQ, and whether the proposed project will affect water quality.

The Application is for groundwater, this section is not applicable

Determination: No significant impact.

Groundwater - *Assess if the proposed project impacts ground water quality or supply. If this is a groundwater appropriation, assess if it could impact adjacent surface water flows.*

The Applicant is increasing the rate at which water is diverted from groundwater, no additional volume was requested. Certificate 76LJ 61969-00 provides enough volume for the proposed use. No depletions to surface waters are anticipated. The Department found that the proposed use will not affect the quality of surface waters or groundwater.

Determination: No impact

DIVERSION WORKS - *Assess whether the means of diversion, construction and operation of the appropriation works of the proposed project will impact any of the following: channel impacts, flow modifications, barriers, riparian areas, dams, well construction.*

Water will be diverted from both wells and used for commercial purposes at the Summit House facility, which includes servicing the summit house, top shop, and ski patrol buildings with potable water. The supply system consists of two wells, eight Well-X-Trol model 302 pressure tanks, associated 1-inch diameter HDPE distribution piping, a 6- inch steel line and 2 ½ inch GI pipe. The system was designed by Tom Cowan, PE of Carver Engineering and approved by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality. Each well was drilled by a licensed well driller (license # WWC-325 & # WWD-126) in accordance with MCA Title 37, Chapter 43 and ARM Title 36, Chapter 21.

The existing PWS well #1 (GWIC No. 88986) is 988 feet deep and has a static water level of 774 feet. The well casing is 10 inches in diameter 0 – 180 feet and 8 inches 180-988 feet. Perforations exist from 958 – 988 feet. The newly drilled PWS well #2 is 997 feet deep and has a static water level of 731.2 feet. The well casing is 10 inches in diameter 0 – 175 feet and 8 inches 35-997 feet. Perforations exist from 937 – 997 feet.

The PWS well #1 contains a Grundfos Model SP-16DS pump with a 25 HP, 480 volt, 3 phase motor; it is capable of producing 70 GPM. PWS well #2 contains a Grundfos Model 85S250-22, 250 HP, 480 volt, 3 phase pump and motor; it is capable of pumping 70 GPM at 1,000 feet of head. The wells are operated in a lead-lag manner and are controlled by the pressure in the water system. Water use is measured via an in-line flow meter. Effluent is discharged to Big Mountain Sewer District, which conveys the effluent down the mountain to the City of Whitefish's collection system. In case of a fire, both pumps will run to provide emergency fire flows. The Department found that no significant negative impact will occur to existing water users and surface water resources from the proposed project.

Determination: No impact.

UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

Endangered and threatened species - *Assess whether the proposed project will impact any threatened or endangered fish, wildlife, plants or aquatic species or any "species of special concern," or create a barrier to the migration or movement of fish or wildlife. For groundwater,*

assess whether the proposed project, including impacts on adjacent surface flows, would impact any threatened or endangered species or “species of special concern.”

The Montana Natural Heritage Program website was reviewed to determine if there are any threatened or endangered fish, wildlife, plants or aquatic species or any “species of special concern” in Township 32N, Range 22W that could be impacted by the proposed project.

The Whitebark Pine (*Pinus albicaulis*) is listed as a sensitive species by the United States Forest Service (USFS). This area of Whitefish Mountain Resort has been disturbed for over 30 years, impact to the sensitive plant species has most likely already occurred.

The Canada Lynx (*Lynx Canadensis*), Grizzly Bear (*Ursus arctos*) and Bull Trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) are listed as threatened by USFS. The Wolverine (*Gulo gulo*), Fisher (*Martes pennanti*), and Westslope Cutthroat Trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkia lewisi*) are listed as sensitive species by the USFS. The Pileated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*), Brown Creeper (*Certhia Americana*), Evening Grosbeak (*Coccothraustes vespertinus*), Varied Thrush (*Ixoreus naevius*), Clark’s Nutcracker (*Nucifraga Columbiana*), Boreal Chickadee (*Poecile hudsonicus*), Pacific Wren (*Troglodytes pacificus*), Sheathed Slug (*Zacoleus idahoensis*), and Pygmy Whitefish (*Prosopium coulteri*) are listed S3 to S3B by MFWP meaning their populations are at risk because their numbers are very limited. Depletions to surface water sources from the proposed groundwater use are not anticipated. An adequate quantity of water will still exist in nearby surface water to maintain existing populations of both threatened and sensitive species of fish should they exist. This area of Whitefish Mountain Resort was historically developed, any impacts to sensitive mammal species or fish most likely have already occurred. The proposed project will not impact any threatened or endangered fish, wildlife, plants and aquatic species or any species of special concern.

Determination: No impact.

Wetlands - *Consult and assess whether the apparent wetland is a functional wetland (according to COE definitions), and whether the wetland resource would be impacted.*

Determination: N/A, project does not involve wetlands.

Ponds - *For ponds, consult and assess whether existing wildlife, waterfowl, or fisheries resources would be impacted.*

Determination: N/A, project does not involve ponds.

GEOLOGY/SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE - *Assess whether there will be degradation of soil quality, alteration of soil stability, or moisture content. Assess whether the soils are heavy in salts that could cause saline seep.*

According to soil survey data provided by the NRCS, soil within the place of use consists mostly of gravelly silt loam and extremely gravelly silt loam. Approximately 40 inches of soil exist above lithic bedrock. Soils within the proposed place of use are not susceptible to saline seep. The use of groundwater for commercial purposes will not cause degradation of soil quality and stability.

Determination: No impact.

VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY/NOXIOUS WEEDS - *Assess impacts to existing vegetative cover. Assess whether the proposed project would result in the establishment or spread of noxious weeds.*

The Summit House Facility and/or development footprint has been in existence for over 30 years. Disturbance to vegetation will not differ from historic disturbance. The Facility exists on US Forest Service property; weed management is guided by them.

Determination: No impact.

AIR QUALITY - *Assess whether there will be a deterioration of air quality or adverse effects on vegetation due to increased air pollutants.*

No air pollutants were identified as resulting from the Applicants proposed use of groundwater for commercial purposes.

Determination: No impact.

HISTORICAL AND ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES - *Assess whether there will be degradation of unique archeological or historical sites in the vicinity of the proposed project if it is on State or Federal Lands. If it is not on State or Federal Lands simply state NA-project not located on State or Federal Lands.*

The Applicant supplied the project approval letter from the US Forest Service addressing the most recent upgrades to the Summit House Facility. They did not address/identify any historical or archeological sites in the vicinity of the proposed project.

Determination: No impact.

DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AND ENERGY - *Assess any other impacts on environmental resources of land, water and energy not already addressed.*

All impacts to land, water and energy have been identified and no further impacts are anticipated.

Determination: No impact.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS - *Assess whether the proposed project is inconsistent with any locally adopted environmental plans and goals.*

The project is located in an area with no locally adopted environmental plans.

Determination: No impact.

ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES - *Assess whether the proposed project will impact access to or the quality of recreational and wilderness activities.*

The proposed project will not inhibit, alter or impair access to present recreational opportunities in the area. The project is not expected to create any significant pollution, noise, or traffic congestion in the area that may alter the quality of recreational opportunities. The proposed place of use and diversion do not exist on land designated as wilderness.

Determination: No impact.

HUMAN HEALTH - *Assess whether the proposed project impacts human health.*

There should be no significant negative impact on human health from this proposed use.

Determination: No impact.

PRIVATE PROPERTY - *Assess whether there is any government regulatory impacts on private property rights.*

Yes___ No_x___ If yes, analyze any alternatives considered that could reduce, minimize, or eliminate the regulation of private property rights.

Determination: No impact.

OTHER HUMAN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES - *For routine actions of limited environmental impact, the following may be addressed in a checklist fashion.*

Impacts on:

- (a) Cultural uniqueness and diversity? None identified.*
- (b) Local and state tax base and tax revenues? None identified.*
- (c) Existing land uses? None identified.*
- (d) Quantity and distribution of employment? None identified.*
- (e) Distribution and density of population and housing? None identified.*
- (f) Demands for government services? None identified.*
- (g) Industrial and commercial activity? None identified.*
- (h) Utilities? None identified.*
- (i) Transportation? None identified.*
- (j) Safety? None identified.*

(k) Other appropriate social and economic circumstances? None identified.

2. Secondary and cumulative impacts on the physical environment and human population:

Secondary Impacts: None identified.

Cumulative Impacts: None identified.

3. Describe any mitigation/stipulation measures: None

4. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives to the proposed action, including the no action alternative, if an alternative is reasonably available and prudent to consider:

No reasonable alternatives were identified in the EA.

PART III. Conclusion

1. Preferred Alternative: None identified.

2. Comments and Responses

4. Finding:

Yes___ No_X_ Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required?

If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action:

An EA is the appropriate level of analysis for the proposed action because no significant impacts were identified.

Name of person(s) responsible for preparation of EA:

Name: Melissa Brickl

Title: Hydrologist/Water Resource Specialist

Date: December 16, 2016